

DUG Conference 2010 – Panel session

Carol Tullo closing summary comments:

There was a tangible energy to the day, probably not unrelated to the pace and momentum of the policy and government agendas in this area and the great interest and excitement in helping shape all this.

Steve started by asking us – who is the efficiency for? There has, from my perspective, been a seismic shift in thinking around data and its re-use. It was interesting to learn about the importance to Barclays of its focus on the use and data from its physical network. Government services have moved into the ether where measurements and statistics are not possible in the same way as with monitored transactions. This is a culture change away from the profession of government that values its accuracy and controls as the Web has meant that we move to a less structured and more informal model of service offering.

So what is Government's approach as it has moved from gatekeeper to enabler?

1. Collaboration– a smaller government at the centre giving steer and direction
2. Giving up control – others get involved and harness participation models and draw on the pool of expert fans eager to improve and correct data
3. Accepting that this arena means a transfer of power/responsibility/authority away from government
4. Champion of open source and platforms

A word about our vocabulary – does government always get the message across simply and with impact? We heard about the compelling human stories that bring issues to life from IDEO – do we get the same warmth from a case study? Yet these are in fact the same. Also we use language like data developers when we are often talking about data fans and can we get more out of simplifying our message and its impact to widen our audience and encourage involvement in this information and data world?

I was struck by a question from the private sector standpoint – how can we tell how our customers use our service? As we loosen controls and enable use of government data we let go and also lose that micro-management. Trends and hits and unique visitors become our indicators and not the richness of the individual interaction.

I would summarise the outcome as providing a platform for users to do things better than the official data providers and then share back with us to improve future releases of data. There are unintended consequences and attendant risks: incomplete/poor data; linking data has potential to identify individuals; poor redaction inadvertently reveals personal data. This is part of the culture change to create a climate where we can experiment and not need to control or second guess every consequence of flexible technology. Success measures for me:

1. UK plc leads innovation
2. Data use embeds behaviour changes so that proactive release is part of everyday business
3. It all just happens and does not need the push of a big policy driver like the Transparency Agenda to get people to act.

13/10/10